

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Meeting Notes for April 4, 2001

Agenda Items

- Briefing on 90% Design for Royal Brougham and Lander stations

Commissioners Present

Rick Sundberg, Chair
Matthew Kitchen
Carolyn Law
Jack Mackie
Don Royse
Mimi Sheridan
Paul Tomita

Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
John Walser, Sound Transit
Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign

The meeting began with review and approval of meeting notes for February 7th, March 7th, and March 21st, 2001.

LRRP Business

Rick Sundberg welcomed Jared Smith and Ron Lewis, who proceeded to update the Panel on the Link project; recent changes, progress, and time schedule. Jared thanked the Panel for its work over the last two years, saying the Panel has exceeded the expectations the City and Sound Transit had when setting up the Light Rail Review Panel. He proceeded to give the Panel a summary of the project, moving north to south:

- Northgate: We're integrating Northgate station planning with the community planning and station area planning work.
- Roosevelt: An alignment still hasn't been selected, but we expect a decision this fall or early next year.
- U District: ST may be deferring a couple of elevators, and making some minor changes in station location. There is also discussion by the Project Review Committee of a possible high-level bridge or Montlake alignment as an alternative to the tunnel. The City is starting its U District transportation study now.
- Capitol Hill: ST is refining the Broadway and Nagle alignment options, and has also come up with a "hybrid" Nagle alignment that reduces the impact of the station and its construction on the Park.
- First Hill: ST is also refining this design.
- Downtown: The revised alignment using a portion of the Convention Place station will have an impact on the King County development project there. It is possible that through joint operation of the tunnel for buses and light rail, there might be a bus connection at CPS, even if not an actual light rail station.
- South Downtown: The first stations proceeding to 100% design! Maintenance is also nearing 90%.
- Southeast: The big issue is that with Airport Link being delayed, ST is moving forward selectively with final design. The City has requested that civil engineering proceed to 90% in order to fully identify the right-of-way and not create a cloud over private property and potential development. (Architectural design will stop now at 60%.) Nonetheless, in spite of the delay, there is a lot of investment happening in Southeast Seattle independent of light

rail and unaffected by it. The Community Development Fund is still moving forward, the SHA projects, etc.

- Seatac and Tukwila: In a holding pattern.
- The Project Review Committee: They've just held their 2nd meeting, and are still deciding the scope of their review. Last meeting included an excellent overview of rail planning by Aubrey Davis and Martha Choe.
- Federal Funding: The new Chair of the House Appropriations Committee has focused in on the Federal Funding Grant Agreement and generated a lot of discussion. They will have a final report in the spring, but stressed the need for local consensus.
- City Council: Recently voted down two resolutions that would have undermined the support for Link light rail (regarding transfer of the King County tunnel and property acquisition). Nonetheless the lively discussion showed there is definitely a split among the Council in terms of support for Link.

Ron Lewis underscored the question regarding the breadth of alternatives the PRC will evaluate, and acknowledged this is still an open question. He also added that because of litigation by Save Our Valley, ST is restricted in its ability to acquire property in the Valley. But they still need to proceed with acquisitions there and elsewhere to stay on a critical path. The Panel responded with questions and comments:

- What is the timing of the decisions regarding 9th and Pine alternatives? Is there consideration being given to a potential light rail station there? *(It was a cost-saving measure to change the alignment, but it is creating problems with the track curvature, joint use of the tunnel, etc. We expect a decision in June. It is unlikely there would be a light rail station there, although there might be access to buses. It is hard to get a platform in there because of the curve.)*
- How does it affect above-grade development? *(King County is examining this—the new alignment may impact project feasibility in that the deal assumes a certain return on investment.)*
- Where do we stand on wiring along MLK—underground or overhead? *(No decision yet. The City wanted to partner with ST to underground, but the costs are too great for the City to take on now. We're planning to show where poles would be placed, but not take the design any further in order to leave the opportunity to revisit the issue later. Maybe over time we can bridge the funding gap. There is obviously a huge community concern about MLK as a "great street" and this presents us with a real dilemma—how to make aerial wiring as pleasing as possible.)*
- Is the \$30 million a net or gross cost? *(Gross. Overhead to overhead wiring is \$3 to \$4 million using wood poles.)*
- Will LRRP have an opportunity review the poles and other related work later prior to completion of design? *(Yes. Civil design is proceeding to 90% now to provide certainty on the right-of-way. We don't want to incur design fees for items that are uncertain. The rest of architectural design will be completed in 2004.)*
- It sounds like we're not really sure what the PRC will be doing over the next several months. When will the scope be settled? *(Everyone is asking that! The Chair, Charles Royer, wants to finalize the draft work program by the next meeting. The PRC is advisory to the Sound Transit Board; they're not supplanting the authority of the Board.)*
- Are they defining their own scope? *(The Board outlined 5 to 6 items they want the PRC to do, but also recognize this group needs flexibility to review broader issues. How far outside the scope of the EIS might they go? We don't know yet.)*

- Will the PRC be giving its feedback to the Board throughout the six-month period, or just with a report at the end? *(It'll be interactive all along. Plus there are five Board members on the PRC, so there is quite a bit of overlap. The meeting notes are on the web now, and the meetings are open to the public. The Mayor said early on that the PRC needs to understand neighborhood issues—the LRRP is a part of that. Royer is attending the City Council briefings. The PRC is being staffed by John Howell and Kjrís Lund.)*

Briefing on 90% Design for Royal Brougham and Lander Stations

John Walser, Sound Transit

Greg Hill, Streeter and Associates

John explained that these are the first two stations to reach 90% design. He reiterated the key issues discussed when the LRRP last reviewed these stations: artwork, bike/ped path. We anticipate a 100% submittal by May 18th, after which the package will go on the shelf while property acquisition proceeds. That work will be followed by the MUP process, with a permit issued by spring 2002, a bid package December 2002, and construction start-up in the summer of 2003. These two stations are part of what is now called University Link and the MOS (minimum operating segment). Before proceeding further with the presentation, introductions were made all around.

Greg Hill continued the presentation, augmented by Jay Rood, landscape architect. Highlights of the presentation include:

- This is a mile-long corridor with platforms some distance from the intersections, and is unique in the Link system in that unless someone is going to the station, there is no reason for pedestrian activity there—there are no storefronts, and vehicles (other than buses) are not allowed.
- We want to help build identity for the area, recognizing people are using it at different speeds.
- The mural art project has progressed now and we're working it to provide more intense plantings around the murals within a narrow, 4' planting strip.
- The bike/ped path has been separated, thanks in part to LRRP involvement, and we're working with standards for distances between planted material and the paths. We're considering columnar, closely spaced, sentinel, and low groundcover with trees as the primary formgiver.
- The archway artwork at the entrance to the Lander station is meant to embody themes of work and working people.
- The colonnade of lights creates a pedestrian scale and a rhythm and structure to the walk to the platform. The benches are informal organizations of "stacked raw materials" of the kind used in manufacturing, but with a finish and detail that reveals itself upon closer inspection. Since this part of town has few if any places for a worker to sit and eat lunch, this spot provides that. The artwork shows the history of the area.
- There are three fence types used—we've changed the design from last time to better integrate with the architecture. The result is a simpler design with references to the cantilevered roof of the canopy. There is the platform fence with leaning rail, the intertrack fence to keep one from crossing the tracks, and the track fence to keep one from going onto the tracks from the plaza—this one is heavily picketed.
- The windscreen is metal and glass, approximately 9' tall.
- Paving patterns are developed for Lander, but not Royal Brougham yet. There are three goals with the paving: 1. To treat the surface so as not to show dirt/debris; 2. To create a distinctive image for passengers upon arrival in the train; and 3. To design a "puzzle" or

design that makes one think about it over several visits. Sound Transit has its own goals too: 1. To have a tactile warning strip and contrast behind it; 2. To incorporate wayfinding, perhaps via the "braid"; and 3. To provide a textured location at the car door locations. The design we've developed employs bars or "piano keys" through the whole platform with more color under the canopy than outside it.

- At Royal Brougham there are a couple of issues—addressing the WSDOT column that sits right in the entry plaza and walkway, and to visually "lighten" the front end view of the canopy through a different treatment of the roof structure. To address the WSDOT column, we narrowed the walkway to 16' wide—still enough for a full trainload—so that the column is now located in the landscape area. We also adjusted the path to undulate in profile.

At this point, Debora interjected that Sound Transit's Internal Design Review team (IDR) is generally happy with the work, citing a few items for further work including the ticket vending at Lander, the 2nd roof at Royal Brougham, and simplification of the TVM box, railing, and paving. There is also a question about the material for the bike path—asphalt or concrete. Seatran is requesting concrete but the consultant would prefer asphalt. The IDR also raised questions about the artwork; its scale, height, and location, the comfort level of the benches and whether they would actually be used. They also questioned the design of too many small landscape areas, preferring to consolidate them into larger pieces.

Katherine Claeys noted that Seatran is working through some issues with Sound Transit on the 90% submittal related to the ped/bike paths, crosswalks, etc.

Discussion

- I'm a little concerned about switching the asphalt bike path to concrete at Lander, and the confusion that may create vis a vis differentiating the ped and bike paths from one another.
- Is the bike path accessible to small trucks for maintenance? What about bollards to slow people down and prevent unintended vehicles from driving on the path? *(The City policy is no obstacles, which means no bollards.)*
- This is essentially a high-speed track! People will try to race the train. What about a rumble strip? *(Only at the platform end.)*
- I appreciate the idea of a picnic area, but wonder whether it is better to place the benches in the platform where people will be. *(We don't envision people hanging around the station, but could see them using the small seating area just off the intersection. The artist's scope is for a large landmark piece.)*
- Would the braid run to the curb or the station? (Haven't yet decided—this is a cost issue.)
- I'm not sure about the large arch. Where is the ST sign going to be? *(Maybe at the street, although this isn't decided yet.)*
- What about the Lida Bathos artwork? *(We still haven't been able to work it out with Seatran. Holgate is the best location, but Seatran is concerned this would be a distraction for cyclists. The proposed location is not on City property and will remain in ST ownership.)*
- I think Seatran is underestimating a cyclist's perceptual capacity! Anyone who can't ride under the arch shouldn't be on a bike anyway. If the arch is on ST property, why does the City have to approve it?
- What about the colors? I'm concerned about the dark blue, for the same reasons we raised with respect to the Southeast at-grade stations. The articulation of the fittings will read better in a lighter color.
- I like the differentiation in fences, but is the design of the fence between the tracks substantial enough to serve its purpose of keeping people out? *(Remember there will be good lighting, signage, and a public address system all around here too.)*

- Seeing the colors is helpful. Finding the balance between an accumulation of detail that is rich vs. just too much is the challenge.
- What is happening with the arch at the pedestrian level? There seems to be a disconnect between the arch and the benches of stacked materials. The bike lockers look like they could be a real graffiti magnet. I have the same feelings about the colors as Jack does.
- The earliest art concepts presented to us used industrial elements as an organic part of the station design. Now the design feels very different—all the industrial references are focused at one art piece. I preferred it more organic and was taken with the original idea of entering a manmade area that reflected the industrial heritage of the area in a integrated way vs. the focused approach used now.
- I have a similar concern that the artwork is so literal. There isn't much there to lead one in different directions upon subsequent visits/viewings. Plus a lack of connection to the rest of the architecture. They don't have to be the same, but there should be a dialogue at least.
- I like the railings very much.
- The artwork isn't linked up with the station nor with the signage.
- Put the benches in the station—there is a mixed message here; the arch says "pass through" while the benches say "linger awhile."
- Perhaps let some landscaping provide more of a sense of enclosure there.
- What if nothing was there at all?
- Assuming that you are correct that people will use the space, then make it compelling enough to hold them there. Let the benches define the space more—they're a little too precious as is.
- This is similar to the issues of the pylons at Edmunds, where we finally got the location right.
- This isn't an issue of location, but of detailing for the pedestrian.

Action

The Panel thanks Streeter and Associates and Sound Transit for the presentation, recommending approval of the 90% design as presented, with particular support for the railings, separation of bike and pedestrian paths at Lander, and changes to the Royal Brougham entry plaza. Particular thanks go to Sound Transit for acquiring more land to achieve the separation of bike/ped paths. The Panel urges the following items to be further refined as part of completing the design work to 100%:

- ***Reconsideration of whether the intertrack fence is substantial enough in design to accommodate its function of keeping people from crossing the tracks;***
- ***The selection of paving material for the bike/ped path at Lander, keeping in mind the need for a clear message to cyclists about which path to follow;***
- ***Support for siting the Bathos artwork "Urban Rest Stop" at Holgate;***
- ***More integration of the arch and other art pieces as part of the overall station, as pieces that provoke thought upon subsequent viewings, and that also function well to create a lingering area for pedestrians from the surrounding area as well as light rail passengers;***
- ***Simplification of the paving pattern, drawing out the braid idea with feeders to the car door paving detail, letting the back of the station drop away in design complexity; and***
- ***Grouping landscaping to get more trees sited for a densely planted appearance.***

Lastly, because this is the last review from the Panel (barring substantial design revisions), the Panel wishes to express its appreciation to the consultants for working diligently over the last two years to develop a creative and thoughtful design for this difficult corridor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm.